

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 478 to highlight the goals of the seventh annual Lights on Afterschool! celebration. This event organized by the Afterschool Alliance is the only national celebration of after-school programs and the important role they play in the lives of children, families and communities.

On October 12, more than 1 million Americans, representing thousands of after-school initiatives across the country, including more than 100 programs in my home State of New York, are expected to open their doors to parents, neighbors, business leaders and elected officials to showcase their accomplishments.

In my own district, events will take place in Tarrytown, White Plains, and Yonkers, and more programs are registering each day.

While there is growing enthusiasm for this year's Lights On celebration, we need more than just one day a year to highlight the importance of after-school programs. That is why I joined with Representatives ROS-LEHTINEN and KILDEE to form the bipartisan Congressional Afterschool Caucus last year. Our mission is simple: to build support for these programs within Congress and to translate that support into sufficient funding to meet the growing demand for after-school initiatives.

For years, we have known that what our kids do after school can have as great an impact as what they do in school.

In 1996, from my seat on the Appropriations Committee, I helped create the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the first-ever Federal after-school initiative.

Since then, I have watched it grow from a million dollar demonstration project to a billion dollar permanent program today, because there is astonishing demand and tremendous unmet need for it.

According to a study conducted by the Afterschool Alliance, 40 percent of middle school children, the age when kids are most vulnerable to engaging in dangerous activities, are unsupervised for a good portion of the day. Parents are crying out for safe, structured environments where their kids can learn and play, make friends and develop new interests. Yet Congress is not doing what it should to ensure that our kids are safe and engaged while their parents are at work.

The Congressional Afterschool Caucus and the Lights On celebration will focus on changing that. We will share the lessons we have learned to make sure after-school does not become an afterthought in our Federal education priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, to join the Caucus, to fight tooth and nail for every dollar available so that kids and their parents have access to these desperately needed programs.

I thank you, I thank my colleague from New York.

Mr. KUHLE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume to close for our side.

Again, I want to commend the gentlewoman from New York for her introduction of this resolution. I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 478, a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of Lights on Afterschool!, a national celebration of after-school programs.

Lights on Afterschool! is a project of the Afterschool Alliance. As many of you may know, the Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of after-school programs for all children. The Alliance was created to conduct this public awareness and advocacy work and to serve as a national voice for after-school programs.

Consistent with the work of the Alliance, they have created the Lights on Afterschool! projects that will host nationwide celebrations this October. These celebrations are a way of highlighting and bringing attention to the importance of after-school programs.

I think every single Member of Congress here can speak to the importance of these programs. I myself have seen the important and necessary role that after-school plays, especially in the everyday lives of working families. Nationwide, 14.3 million children take care of themselves after the school day ends. Of these, 6.5 million children are in after-school programs.

We all know that these programs provide not only a place for young people to be after school but also provide a tremendous benefit. Some of us have probably even visited after-school programs in our district. We appreciate the role that they have played and will continue to play in providing a safe place for our youth to be after school and provide them with the opportunity to grow and to learn.

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Every statistic that you can look at and find generally depicts the fact that when young people get in trouble the most it is when they are without supervision, have nothing meaningful to do and are left to their own environs.

As a matter of fact, my parents used to say it differently. They used to say that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. I guess what they really meant was that if young people did not have something created for them to do, that we would create our own things, and oftentimes those things would not be in the best interests not only of our individual development but not in the best interests of the communities where we were.

So when the gentlewoman from New York introduces such a resolution, she is really doing all of America a great favor by helping us to remember that if we do not provide positive things for young people to do, oftentimes they will create the negative. So I thank Mrs. LOWEY for her introduction of this resolution and strongly support it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KUHLE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time at this moment. Once again, I would like to commend my colleague Mrs. LOWEY for bringing this important resolution to the floor, and I thank my colleague Mr. DAVIS for expounding upon the very need for it, and with that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. KUHLE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 478.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### RAILROAD RETIREMENT DISABILITY EARNINGS ACT

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5483) to increase the disability earning limitation under the Railroad Retirement Act and to index the amount of allowable earnings consistent with increases in the substantial gainful activity dollar amount under the Social Security Act.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5483

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Railroad Retirement Disability Earnings Act".

#### SEC. 2. REFORM OF DISABILITY EARNINGS LIMITATION PROVISIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2(e)(4) of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 is amended—

(1) by striking "\$400 in earnings" in the first sentence and inserting "the monthly allowable earnings as defined in the section";

(2) by striking "\$4,800" in the fourth sentence and inserting "the amount of earnings computed by totaling the monthly allowable earnings as determined under this section for each month in the year"; and

(3) by striking the fifth sentence and inserting "If the total amount of such individual's earnings during such year (exclusive of earnings for services as described in subdivision (3) and after deduction of disability related work expenses) is in excess of the annual allowable earnings amount, the number of months in such year with respect to which an annuity is not payable by reason of the first and third sentences shall not exceed the number of months derived by dividing the amount by which such annual earnings exceed the annual allowable earnings amount by the monthly allowable earnings amount determined under this section. If the computation under the preceding sentence results in a remainder greater than or equal to one-half, the number of months for which an annuity is not payable as determined under the preceding sentence shall be increased by one. The annual allowable earnings amount shall be computed by totaling the amount of monthly allowable earnings as determined under the first sentence of this subdivision

for each month in the calendar year. If the amount of the individual's annuity has changed during the calendar year, any payment of annuities which become payable solely by reason of the limitations in the preceding three sentences shall be made first with respect to the month or months for which the annuity is larger. For purposes of this subdivision, 'the monthly allowable earnings' shall be \$700, except that for each year after 2007, 'the monthly allowable earnings' amount shall be the larger of the amount for the previous year or the amount calculated by multiplying \$700 by the ratio of the national average wage index for the year 2 calendar years before the year for which the amount is being calculated to the national average wage index for the year 2005. The amount so computed will be rounded to the next higher multiple of \$10 where such amount is a multiple of \$5 but not of \$10 and to the nearest multiple of \$10 in any other case.'.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section take effect January 1, 2007.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5483.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I strongly support this bipartisan legislation.

H.R. 5483 is a bill to help disabled railroad employees. Under our current system, a permanently disabled railroad worker is given a monthly stipend by the Railroad Retirement Board. The average stipend is about \$1,911 a month, which is often too little to support a family. This has led disabled workers to seek a supplemental source of income.

If a disabled railroad worker is well enough to work at another job, current law limits his or her earnings to only \$400 a month, a limit which has remained unchanged for years.

Mr. Speaker, in my own district, the mayor of Mentor, Ohio, is a disabled railroad worker, and he can only accept \$400 as his monthly pay for being the mayor of Mentor.

This legislation that we are considering today, H.R. 5483, the Railroad Retirement Disability Earnings Act, will increase that amount to only \$700 per month, with no decrease in retirement benefits. The \$700 figure will also be indexed to inflation.

The cost of this legislation is estimated to be at less than \$500,000 a year. To put things in perspective, the National Railroad Retirement Trust is currently valued at over \$29 billion and

has been so well managed that railroad payroll taxes are actually going down.

H.R. 5483, the Railroad Retirement Disability Earnings Act, is important to disabled railroad employees and their families and is one of the most important pieces of railroad legislation that we will consider this year.

I urge your support for this bill and wish to commend our committee chairman, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska; the ranking minority member, Mr. OBERSTAR; and the subcommittee's ranking minority member, Ms. BROWN, for her outstanding leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to thank Chairman YOUNG and Chairman LATOURETTE and Ranking Member OBERSTAR for their work in bringing this important bill to the House floor for a vote.

It has been nearly 20 years since we have passed a bill to help out our Nation's rail workers who were injured on the job and unable to continue working in the railroad industry. I am pleased to see that everyone has agreed to support an increase in their allowed monthly earnings limit so that these hardworking men and women can work freely in jobs that are not as physically demanding as those in the railroad industry.

H.R. 5483 will increase the outside earnings limits for disabled workers from \$400 to \$700 per month, which will then increase yearly based on the Social Security index.

We all know that the cost of living in this country is skyrocketing. Whether it is the cost of needed medicines, increased insurance premiums, or the high price of gasoline, this small increase will make a major impact on the ability of these individuals to provide for their families.

I stand in strong support of this legislation, and I am happy to see everyone has come together today and that the views of all interested groups, not just a select few, were included in this legislation.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. Very shortly, I would advise my distinguished ranking member that I have no additional speakers, but I do want to make this comment.

This is my first session of Congress to serve as the chairman of the Railroad Subcommittee, and it has been my distinct pleasure to serve with the gentlewoman from Florida, and I want to thank her for the kind and bipartisan way in which she has treated all of the issues that have come before the subcommittee these last 2 years.

I do not know where our forces are going to take us in the next couple of years, but I very much look forward to

working with you, and with that, when the gentlewoman yields back, I will do the same.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5483. This bill increases the outside earnings limit for disabled workers from \$400 to \$700 per month, and indexes their outside earnings annually after 2007 to increases in the national average wage index—consistent with the indexing mechanism for determining substantial gainful employment under the Social Security Act.

Currently, the Railroad Retirement Act withholds monthly annuities for disabled workers who earn more than \$400 in outside income. At the end of each year, the withheld annuities are reimbursed to disabled workers whose total annual earnings are less than \$5,000. Otherwise, the annuity is subject to a deduction of 1 month's benefit for each multiple of \$400 earned over \$5,000. H.R. 5483 increases that threshold to \$8,750.

With ever-increasing costs for health care and prescription drugs, an extra \$300 in earnings per month could make a real difference for disabled persons, who are all too often denied affordable, comprehensive healthcare, and guaranteed coverage of prescription drugs.

The Railroad Retirement Board's chief actuary estimates that these increases would not have a substantial impact on the Railroad Retirement Trust Fund. According to the actuary, the cost of raising the disability work deduction limit would be less than \$1 million per year. That is a small price to pay for helping meet the needs of many disabled persons and their families.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 5483.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5483.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### DAM SAFETY ACT OF 2006

Mr. KUHLMAN of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4981) to amend the National Dam Safety Program Act, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4981

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Dam Safety Act of 2006".

#### SEC. 2. NATIONAL DAM INVENTORY.

Section 6 of the National Dam Safety Program Act (33 U.S.C. 467d) is amended to read as follows: